

# Applying Scripture to Life

## Topic 1 – Introduction

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### Introduction

How does the world “do life”? They hunker down and get through. They rely on resources inside or outside themselves or others who may extend themselves in care. How do believers “do life”? We are connected to the transcendent Creator who knows each of us intimately through His Son. We have been changed and empowered to live in a way that glorifies Him. We do that by relying on Him and His powerful, heart-changing revelation, the Scriptures. Believers “do life” by applying Scripture to life.

There are many people throughout the world who are hurting. That should not be surprising since the Scriptures tell us that diverse people in diverse life situations with diverse life experiences will undergo trouble in their lives (Job 5:7; 14:1). There are inevitable varieties of hardships that will fall upon each of us unexpectedly (James 1:2-4). This is a common human condition. Some people are hurting in the purely physical realm from things like the external difficulties of life (i.e., poverty, hunger, etc.) or physical maladies which are ultimately the result of the Fall. Others are hurting in ways that affect their behavior, emotions, or thinking. Others are hurting because of the sins of other people. Still others have made choices to sin and are reaping the consequences.

The purpose of this series is to equip each of us so that through the sufficiency of Christ and the Scriptures we can mature and grow in our ability to apply the Scriptures to our own difficult life issues and sin.

Also, there are many believers who are very good at extending judgment to individuals or their families who are struggling with difficult behavioral, emotional, and cognitive issues. Instead, it is important that we become very good at extending compassion, grace, and care to those dear souls. The additional purpose of this series to equip us to bring Biblical care to our brethren when the inevitable opportunities to extend ourselves in love are presented.

God gives believers the resources necessary to address every life issue in a way that honors Him (2 Peter 1:2-4); and to bring lasting, God-honoring care to hurting people. This is not an activity reserved for an elite group of professionals (“experts”) or those who have received special training or certification. In recent times, this care is termed “Biblical Counseling”. In the times of the Apostles, it was called disciple making.

The class plan will begin with several areas of practical/applicable theology and the implications for addressing difficult life issues and sin. Then we will address specific areas of struggle like forgiveness, pride, anger, temptation, trials and suffering, decision making, sexual sin, anxiety and worry, depression, fear of man, and specific mental illnesses.

## **Disclaimer**

I am not a medical doctor. I have no medical training beyond basic first aid and CPR. No one should independently change the course of medical treatment based on what I share today or in this course. No one should start taking unprescribed medication, stop taking prescribed medication, or alter the dosage of prescribed medication based on what I say today. You should always talk to the medical doctor who prescribed any medication before changing the course of treatment.

## **Mental Illness**

The world calls these behavioral, emotional, and cognitive issues mental illness. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) calls mental illness "... a medical condition that disrupts a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning" (from [namilouisiana.org](http://namilouisiana.org)). The key phrase is "medical condition". The prevailing thought in the medical community is that people struggling with behavioral, emotional, or cognitive difficulties are sick. This is based on a medical model of these struggles.

The problem with this medical model is that pathology (cellular level abnormalities as the cause of disease) related to psychological disorders does not exist. Viewing these difficulties in a purely medical way is one end of a spectrum. The other end of the spectrum can be found with believers who reject any medical causes for behavioral, emotional, or cognitive struggles. They believe that the cause for any of these struggles is always sin.

When there is psychosis, a break with reality, then the brain is not working correctly, and the person may need medical treatment. Additionally, when there has been an injury to the brain, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive struggles can be traced to that injury. In those situations, God and His word still has much to say about how to honor Him in the illness.

The delineation for the believer is the word of God. Believers must be careful to never call anything a disease that the Bible calls sin and to never call anything sin that the Bible does not clearly identify as sin. Labeling sin as disease influences God's children to avoid responsibility for their sin which offers no hope. Examples include anxiety/worry, substance addictions, normal sadness, anger, obsessiveness, etc.

## **Psychology**

It is important to understand the difference between what the "world" says and what God says if we are to address our own life issues and bring lasting change to help others.

When we speak of "world" we mean the current world system that belongs to Satan. It is a system of deception and wickedness that leaves God out and is opposed to Him (James 1:13-14; 2 Cor 11:3; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor 4:4; John 16:11; 1 John 2:15-17; James 3:15). Satan's aim is to make the values of this godless system seem attractive; appealing to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life to entice us to sin.

So, we should not be surprised that what the "world" thinks of help for hurting people and what God thinks are different. There are three questions that psychology seeks to answer regarding people. The world seeks to answer these questions with theories that address symptoms and not the root cause. Believers seek these answers in the Bible.

### Who are people?

Psychology – People are evolved animals born morally neutral or good, governed by instincts.

Bible – People are created beings in the image of God for the purpose of glorifying God.

### What is wrong with people?

Psychology – Environmental factors (family, religion, trauma, etc.) have influenced people to cause psychological problems. People are not at fault; they are not responsible.

Bible – People are sinners by nature and choice; they are responsible for their sin and responses to experiences.

### How do you fix people?

Psychology – People are fixed by medication designed to attack behavior and/or re-education and changing of emotions and thinking by self-actualization, improving self-worth, eliminating self-defeating outlooks on life, etc.

Bible – People require freedom from the penalty and power of sin through salvation in Christ; then growth (progressive sanctification) through the Holy Spirit and word of God.

### **❖ How do you answer those three questions?**

#### **Capable and Competent to Disciple**

Americans have developed a method of belief and action that relies on authorities on the subject at hand. People who are doctors (MDs or PhDs), certified in a particular field, accomplished in a field (that may or not have anything to do with what they are speaking on) are viewed as more believable than those without those certifications. They are viewed as enlightened on that topic.

Unfortunately, many within the American church have developed this authority-based method of belief and action when it comes to ministry. This has resulted in things like “sharing” the gospel by inviting people to church or church activities so the pastor can talk to them; believers referring people to mental health “professionals” to care for hurting brethren; or churches only allowing certified or formally trained individuals to care for hurting people. The result is that many congregants feel inadequate to bring needed care to hurting people.

### **❖ Are you authority-based in your thinking?**

Remember that in recent times, this care is termed “Biblical Counseling”, but in the times of the Apostles it was called disciple making. Unfortunately, the pseudo-biblical title makes it look like secular counseling or therapy which only adds to the authority-based mentality when it comes to who can disciple. Here are some points to ponder.

1. Making disciples is the responsibility of every believer.

<sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

This “Great Commission” is our Lord’s last command to His disciples (i.e., us). The only imperative in this passage is “make disciples”. “Go”, “baptizing”, and “teaching” are participles that modify or describe the main verb of “making disciples”. These activities characterize disciple making; they are the “how” of disciple making.

“Go” is literally “having gone”. It assumes an active pursuit of the lost (Luke 19:10). To whom are we to go? “All the nations”, which includes family, neighbors, workmates, strangers, and even different countries. This “going” is to increasing spheres or relationships personally removed from myself (Acts 1:7-8): near, farther, even farther, and very far.

“Baptizing” has to do with identifying individuals with Jesus Christ. An act of obedience by the new disciple that shows their desire to follow Jesus with their entire life. It is an outward expression of what has happened in the inner person. It is a sign of entrance into God's family and of pledged submission to His Lordship.

“Teaching” is not just giving knowledge but teaching a lifestyle – “to obey all that the Lord commanded”. Those that surrender to Christ for salvation, identifying themselves with Him in baptism, must be trained to observe all that He commanded. This process continues until each believer is presented “complete in Christ” (Colossians 1:28).

Movement towards Christlikeness marks a believer; a professed conversion does not make a true disciple. Jesus said, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine...” (John 8:31).

This is not a trivial effort. That is why Jesus gave the promise that “I am with you always, even to the end of the age”. The effort is not our own, but Christ’s.

Jesus made disciples by **personal effort and time**.

<sup>13</sup>And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. <sup>14</sup>And He appointed twelve, so that they would be **with Him** and that He *could* send them out to preach, <sup>15</sup>and to have authority to cast out the demons. (Mark 3:13-15)

The goal of discipleship is not to make replicas of ourselves, but of Christ. Therefore, all disciple makers must be pursuing growth in their own relationship with the Lord.

<sup>1</sup>Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

❖ **Are you putting personal time and effort towards obeying Jesus’ command?**

2. Every Spirit-filled believer is capable and commanded to disciple one another.

a. The result of Spirit-filling is teaching and admonishing other believers.

<sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup>**speaking to one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (Ephesians 5:18-19)

<sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom **teaching and admonishing** one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

We will talk in more detail about the filling of the Spirit in a later lesson. For now, it is sufficient to say that Spirit-filling results in teaching and admonishing one another.

“Teaching” means to provide instruction, impart positive truth, in a formal or informal setting. Inherent is the intent to influence understanding with the aim to shape the will of one taught.

“Admonish” conveys the ideas of encouraging, advising, and warning people of the consequences of their behavior. It speaks of encouraging counsel in view of sin and coming punishment; counsel with a warning involved. The word implies a definite exhortation, correction, and warning. When it is used, there is always the implication of a problem. It presupposes an obstacle that must be removed or changed. This is the Greek word “noutheteō” from which we get “nouthetic counseling”.

From these passages, the only requirement to be able to “admonish” is to be Spirit-filled (allowing the words of Christ to richly dwell within us).

❖ **Are you living a life of worship, consistently filled with the Spirit?**

b. Spirit-filled believers are “able to admonish” other believers.

<sup>13</sup>Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and **able also to admonish one another**. (Romans 15:13-14)

“Able” conveys the basic meaning of inherent ability to do something or accomplish some end. Its usage here means that you continuously have the inherent ability to admonish one another.

“Admonish” is the same word used in Colossians 3:16.

❖ **Are you walking in the Spirit in order to be able to admonish the brethren?**

- c. Spirit-filled believers are called to restore sinning believers.

<sup>1</sup>Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, **you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness**; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup>**Bear one another's burdens**, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2)

“Spiritual” believers are those who are filled with the Spirit and, therefore, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit. They are to restore those caught in any trespass (sin). This has nothing to do with your maturity or spiritual growth. This has to do with walking in the Spirit.

Spiritual believers are to bear the burdens of trespassing believers. “Bear” has the thought of carrying with endurance; sustain, uphold, or support. “Burdens” refers to heavy loads that are difficult to lift and carry, representing personal difficulty or problem. Love demands that we support believers who are struggling with difficulties or sin.

❖ **Do you love enough to do the hard work of restoring a sinning brethren?**

- d. The goal disciple-making is to labor to present everyone who comes across your path as complete in Christ.

<sup>28</sup>We **proclaim** Him, **admonishing** every man and **teaching** every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. <sup>29</sup>For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. (Colossians 1:28-29)

This effort is accomplished in the power of the Spirit with labor and striving by proclaiming Christ, admonishing, and teaching.

❖ **Are you exerting energy, “laboring” and “striving”, to make disciples?**

- e. All believers are to minister to other believers.

<sup>14</sup>We urge you, brethren, **admonish the unruly**, **encourage the fainthearted**, **help the weak**, be patient with everyone. (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

Paul is urging all of us to care for each of us. “Urge” is translated variously as “implore”, “entreat”, “plead”, “appeal”, “beseech”, “exhort”, “encourage”, “beg”, “invite”, or “comfort”. Paul isn’t talking to elders or deacons or ministry leaders or people with certification or qualifications. He is talking to all of us, the brethren.

❖ **Are you involved with your brothers and sisters in a personal way which gives you opportunities to minister to them?**

- f. Believers do not need to experience the same difficulty as others to provide care.

Many people believe that it is impossible to care for some else to whom you cannot personally relate. The thought is, “I have to walk a mile in their shoes before I can help them.” The Bible holds to a very different paradigm for providing care.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

The only requirement to provide Biblical care is a Spirit-filled believer. Because I am a believer, by definition, I have received the Lord’s comfort for the purpose to be able to comfort others.

❖ **Are you comforting other believers?**

**Summary**

The Scriptures are clear that all believers are able and commanded to use the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit to address their own and others’ life issues and sin. If we are going to use the Scriptures in this way, then the Scriptures need to be an integral part of our life.

<sup>16</sup>**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you**, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

<sup>15</sup>Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, **accurately handling the word of truth.** (2 Timothy 2:15)

<sup>9</sup>For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God *was* upon him. <sup>10</sup>For Ezra had **set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances** in Israel. (Ezra 7:9-10)

❖ **What are you doing to “do life” by taking in the Scriptures, living the Scriptures, and caring for those who are hurting through the Scriptures?**

## Additional Study

Read Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-16; and Psalm 119:9-11 and answer these questions.

Are you treasuring God's word in your heart?

What can God's word do powerfully in your heart?

What does/would treasuring God's word look like?

What differences would be evident in your life if you were treasuring God's word in your heart (specific thoughts and deeds)?

Read Colossians 1:28-29 and answer the following questions.

When was the last time you "proclaimed Him"?

How should you view non-believers that cross your path?

How should you view believers that cross your path?

What specific ways are you currently laboring and striving to make disciples?

How would your life look differently if you were living out this passage?

Read Galatians 6:1-2 and answer the following questions.

In this passage, the believer who restores the sinning brother/sister is described as "spiritual" (Spirit-filled). Does that describe you?

If not, what needs to change to so that it describes you?

Read Ephesians 1:3-4.

List out as many spiritual blessings as you can think of.